

The influence of hip hop on today's youth essay sample

[Art & Culture](#), [Music](#)



" After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music." This profound statement from English writer, Aldous Huxley, demonstrates the importance that music obtains in today's society. Simply, music is a form of expression, not limited to any specific genre. Although this expression is not limited to one genre, there is one that seemingly obtains the title of most controversial. The Rap/Hip-Hop genre has been harshly criticized for the topics of discussion in which many songs entail, and the various projected images. Everything has its pros and cons; many people have lost sight of its purpose. Student of Dartmouth College, Rebecca Heller states, " Many people don't realize that hip-hop began by bringing communities and neighborhoods together on the streets of the South Bronx." Hip-Hop is not only a tool of personal expression, but it is also a tool of communal empowerment. Tricia Rose, author of *Black Noise*, writes that " it is a black cultural expression that prioritizes black voices from the margins of urban America" (2).

Hip-Hop is a social movement. It is a way for the African-American community to identify, as the search for identification is a struggle. " Hip hop emerges from a complex cultural exchanges and larger social and political conditions of disillusionment and alienation" (59). In today's society, the best method in connecting to the youth is the media outlet, through music or television. So how does Rap/Hip-Hop influence today's youth? It influences each individual differently; life is what you make of it. Hip Hop influences today's youth either positively or negatively; it creates a sense of awareness, cultural connection, and empowerment or creates a negative image for admiration and enforces negative stereotypes. Altogether hip hop is a

powerful force, not to be taken lightly. In the words of Busta Rhymes, " Hip-hop reflects the truth, and the problem is that hip-hop exposes a lot of the negative truth that society tries to conceal. It's a platform where we could offer information, but it's also an escape." Much of hip hop's negative connotations derive from its bold and daring nature of expression. Most artists of this genre are very blunt and aren't afraid to speak their mind.

" Rap music and hip hop culture are cultural, political, and commercial forms, and for many young people they are the primary cultural, sonic, and linguistic windows on the world" (Rose 19). The discussion of controversial topics through a creative outlet encourages the youth to become politically and socially engaged. The majority of today's youth does not watch the news; this is a more appealing manner. An idol, role model, or favorite celebrity's discussion of social and political issues sparks an interest in the minds of the youth. For example, the activism from celebrities in the Trayvon Martin case increased awareness and interest of the youth. Rapper, Plies, created a tribute to Trayvon Martin, and the YouTube video received over 500, 000 views. Hip hop has the audacity to speak on issues that others are afraid of.

To speak to the second part of Busta Rhymes statement, hip hop is an escape for many. It is a way to temporarily leave a current state of endurance. Whether this endurance is school stress, home life, or whatever the case may be, music is an escape method. With hip hop, there is a sense of association, an item that humans thrive on. To know that another person is enduring a similar struggle is mind-easing. This allows a state of relaxation

and ease. For youth, the harsh realities of life sometimes become overwhelming, and hip hop is an outlet or escape. Head phones in, tuning out the world.

Today the sense of black pride and empowerment is scarce. Hip Hop is an attempt to revamp this movement. Hip hop is an attempt to keep the dream that previous African American leaders had. There was once a point in time when African Americans were not equal, and the world was truly against them; today's youth tends to forget this. In his book *Black Identity: Rhetoric, Ideology, And Nineteenth-Century Black Nationalism*, Dexter Gordon writes that, "The erasure and exclusion of blacks from the public sphere presented America's "colored" inhabitants with a difficult rhetorical challenge.

Inscribed in both proslavery discourse and in racist America's symbols and practices as inhuman, nineteenth-century black rhetors had to construct their constitution as human and deserving of treatment as such, with limited access to the available means of public communication" (70).

Now that the African-American race has full access to available means of public communication, it should be used to its fullest potential. Hip hop holds so much power; it is the voice of the people. This voice is the voice that the youth hears and listens to on a daily basis. Hip hop is the Malcolm X of today, the face of black power. Words have so much power, put to music they are a force to not be reckoned with. At once white supremacy dominated the country; hip hop is a chance at black superiority. Blacks are the leaders of this genre and have a chance for their voice and opinions to be heard through an outlet that reaches everyone, particularly the youth. African-

Americans have a history of signifying in literature, music is no different. All songs have a surface meaning, but hip hop is about the underlying message. It has a way of speaking to its audience that no other genre has. Hip hop is one of the most popular genres in the world, and its power is astonishing.

To refer to the previous statement from Busta Rhymes, Hip Hop is not afraid to touch the subjects most are afraid to. It reveals many of the negative truths of society. In the article "From Civil Rights to Hip Hop: Toward a Nexus of Ideas," author Derrick Alridge writes, that "Since its emergence in the late 1970s, SPC Hip Hop has explored such themes as police brutality toward African Americans, black incarceration, the need for lack leadership, black nationalism, black love, and African American solidarity" (233). These themes are less explored today, but Hip Hop is a way of expressing feelings towards them. Tupac is perhaps the most influential rapper. Although is no longer alive, his music remains influential to this day. Songs like "Changes" and "Keep Ya Head Up" are truly inspirational and speak to many of these themes. In "Changes" he said, "I see no changes. All I see is racist faces. Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races we under. I wonder what it takes to make this one better place," speaking to the racial issues in America.

In "Keep Ya Head Up" he spoke to themes of men's responsibility and black love by stating, "I wonder why we take from our women. Why we rape our women, do we hate our women? I think it's time to kill for our women. Time to heal our women, be real to our women." Tupac dared to say what no one else would. Another example of Hip Hop speaking to these various themes is Public Enemy's song, "Fear of a Black Planet." They spoke to theme of Black

Nationalism by stating, " Excuse us for the news. You might not be amused. But did you know white comes from Black. No need to be confused." These are very strong words that speak to the youth, influencing their perception of reality. Bringing issues to the youth's attention encourages action. The youth is the future; they must be active and involved. Gordon also writes, " Their physical chains contorted black bodies, and their white supremacist discourse squelched the black voice and projected black invisibility. A public black challenge would emerge" (Gordon 71).

Hip hop is the " black challenge." It is an end to this notion of black invisibility, as it reaches millions of people, globally. The African-American race has a history of struggle and oppression, but has regained its voice through music. White supremacist can no longer squelch the black voice or project black invisibility because hip hop is everywhere. It is in the car, home, grocery store, and movie theatre. It is on the side-walk, street, magazine cover, and television. It touches every aspect of life in the average human, especially the youth. It is not only a way for the youth to support this revolution of black power, but is also an outlet for participation. Young artists are taking over hip-hop, for instance, Diggy Simmons, Lil' Twist, Mindless Behavior, Keke Palmer, and many others. Hip hop allows the voice of the youth to be heard by either themselves or others in their age bracket. This gives the youth a sense of power, positively influencing them. Although Hip Hop is prevalent in the African-American community, it is not subject to just African-Americans.

It gives all youth a sense of power and touches the lives of everyone, as hip hop is international and does not discriminate. White artists such as Eminem, Machine Gun Kelly, Yelawolf, Mac Miller, even Justin Bieber, hold established positions in the Hip Hop world. Hip hop is one of the widest genres. Its power is the ability to reach almost everyone, but its reach to the youth is extensive. The power to influence is within the youth; they are the group that is influenced easier. Music is the easiest way to attempt to influence this audience as the majority of the youth watches TV and listens to the radio. Hip hop happens to influence them in this manner, establishing a sense of power and purpose.

Everyone likes to be important; Hip Hop allows the youth to feel important. This is a confidence-booster and a push towards success. In the words of Nas in his song entitled "I Can," "I know I can be what I wanna be. If I work hard at it I'll be where I wanna be." This attitude is the message to all youth, work hard and you will achieve. Hip Hop is also a form of communal empowerment. It has helped this nation come together and break the barriers of race and class; hip hop accepts everyone.

In his book entitled *Hip Hop Matters*, Craig Watkins states that "for much of its history hip hop has defied the racial and class boundaries that shape life in America" (85). He uses rapper Eminem as an example. He goes on to say that, "deeply rooted in Eminem's appeal to the disadvantaged and the poor, irrespective to color, is a powerful message: that despite their real and perceived racial differences impoverished communities share important interests" (92). Hip Hop is not defined by a color; it is a genre that everyone

can relate to. Without Hip Hop, there is a possibility that racial tension would rise. Much of Hip Hop discusses the struggle, which is a common ground for everyone. A common ground goes a long way. Without Hip Hop, there is a possibility that racial tension would rise. Much of the genre discusses the struggle, which is a common ground for everyone.

A common ground goes a long way. Hip Hop has improved race relations and brought the youth of today together. Although there are many positives of Hip Hop, there are a few negatives. In her article entitled "Researcher cites negative influences of hip-hop," Kathy SaeNgian of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette writes, "What's changed over time is the greater sexualization of hip-hop. Initially, it started off as a revolutionary form of music. Now, large corporations produce images that sell, and there is a blatant link between hip-hop and pornography" (par. 6). Hip Hop has created a negative image in the eyes of many and the youth of today follows its example from sexualization, to language and drug use. Although there are various negative images, the many aspects of Hip-Hop are all laid out, but what is picked up is left up to the individual. Overall, Hip Hop influences many people greatly, either positively or negatively. Its purpose and relayed messages speak to the youth of today. It has prioritized the black voice. Rapper Doug E. Fresh stated that, "Hip-hop is supposed to uplift and create, to educate people on a larger level and to make a change." This is what it has done. Despite the few negatives, Hip-Hop has made a tremendous impact on today's youth.

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